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ABSTRACT

This booklet documents the first 5 years of the Alaska State Writing Consortium, an association made up of 45 Alaska school districts, the Alaska Department of Education, and the University of Alaska. The Consortium, which oversees the organization and implementation of teacher training programs in writing and the teaching of writing, has five basic aims: (1) to improve student achievement in writing; (2) to improve the teaching of writing through staff development; (3) to identify exemplary writing teachers in Alaska and train and support them as teacher-consultants; (4) to foster and support teachers as researchers; and (5) to make efficient use of consultants and resources by providing a cooperative interdistrict network. The booklet is in four main sections. The first section describes the organization: what it is; the purpose; how it came to be; membership; management and leadership; and funding. The second section covers the training program: how it works and its benefits. The third section deals with the consortium's impact, covering survey results, impact on teaching skills, and impact on student achievement. The fourth section deals with implications for the future and the next stage of the Consortium. Appendixes include commonly asked questions, information contact, 1986 Consortium members, and a letter exchange on fluency versus correctness from the network newsletter. (SR)

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THE ALASKA STATE WRITING CONSORTIUM:

THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

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THE ALASKA STATE WRITING CONSORTIUM:

THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

It is rare in Alaska education that there is a sustained common commitment to a vision of teaching excellence. Across Alaska, in all grade levels and curriculum areas for the last five years, the Alaska State Writing Consortium has been a model of successful collaboration. This is the beginning; the commitment continues.

-Marshall Lind, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Education

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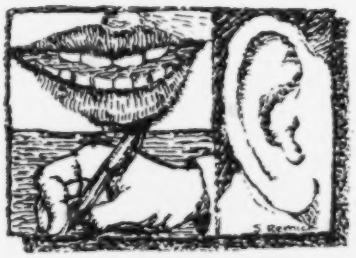

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THE ORGANIZATION

The ASWC is especially notable because it is the one educational process that has created a bond among teachers statewide, and gained recognition from administrators as well...It brings together effective teachers from all over Alaska who come on their own time to learn to be even better teachers. The main strength of the Consortium is that teachers teach teachers...the techniques and strategies filter out across the state like ripples on the water.

-from survey narratives

THE ASWC: WHAT IT IS

The Alaska State Writing Consortium is an association made up of 45 Alaska school districts, the Alaska Department of Education, and the University of Alaska. The Consortium oversees the organization and implementation of teacher training programs in writing and the teaching of writing.

THE PURPOSE

The Consortium has five basic aims:

*To improve student achievement in writing, both as a skill and as a thinking tool for learning in all content areas.

*To improve the teaching of writing by providing a staff development program that uses proven, successful techniques.

* To identify exemplary Alaska teachers of writing: to train and support these teachers as teacher-consultants who can conduct staff development programs in writing instruction for other teachers in their districts and statewide; to assist these teachers in examining and articulating their best practices in the context of current research.

*To foster and support teachers as researchers: to promote teachers as being active in and central to the betterment of writing instruction, capable of generating and contributing significant knowledge in the field.

*To make efficient use of consultants and resources by providing a cooperative interdistrict network.

HOW THE ASWC CAME TO BE

In 1978, the Anchorage School District, in cooperation with the University of Alaska, Anchorage, initiated the Anchorage Writing Project, as an affiliate of the National Writing Project. Originally designed to train Anchorage teachers only, the Anchorage Project has been very successful, and provided an early model for the statewide Consortium. In the fall of 1980, six women from five other school districts and the Department of Education met in Anchorage and brainstormed ways to apply the ideas and energy of the Bay Area Writing Project teacher training program and the example of the the Anchorage Project to the entire state of Alaska. Through their enthusiasm and commitment to the idea of a statewide cooperative effort, the Consortium was born.

The nine charter member districts who agreed to launch the training efforts were: Kodiak, Kenai, Fairbanks, Northwest Arctic, North Slope Borough, Delta Greely, Mat-Su, Anchorage, Railbelt. In the summer of 1981, the first two Summer Institutes were held in Fairbanks for 50 teachers from those districts. The Anchorage Project offered much initial advice about the management of the Consortium Institutes, while running their own independent institute that summer. They continued to operate independently until 1984 when the Anchorage School District joined the Consortium, thereby making their experience and expertise available statewide.

As of the fall of 1986, 45 of the 55 public school districts(SEE APPENDIX), and the entire statewide University system are members of the Consortium, a testament to not only the effectiveness of its management, but also to the viability and vitality of the training model and the enthusiasm for teaching it inspires.

In the summer of 1986, the Consortium sponsored two Invititational Institutes (one each in Fairbanks and Anchorage) and ten Basic Institutes in Ketchikan, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kodiak, Soldotna, and Wasilla. There is a growing interest among member districts to host a Basic Institute within their district as a way of involving a larger number of their teachers in training. Host districts provide the facility, teacher-leader accomodations and clerical and logistical support. The Consortium provides a pre-selected, effective teacher-leader, and handles all the pre-Institute registration and planning, credits, scheduling and over-all management.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Consortium is voluntary, and entitles district and university employees to participate in Summer Institutes. Classroom teachers and graduate education students are given priority as the pre-registration process begins. The Department of Education was granted five discretionary slots by the Consortium board in 1983, to use at the coordinator's discretion, for Department employees or non-member district staff.

To become members of the Consortium, interested districts must:

-pay an annual membership fee of $1000.00

-provide a letter of commitment to the ASWC coordinator, stating an understanding of Consortium policies, and committing the resources necessary to fully activiate the program in the district.

-identify one teacher and one administrator to act as a team and represent the district at the annual meeting and serve as the district conduit of communication.

-together with local district teacher-consultants and/or the statewide coordinator support an effective inservice program for the district, consistent with the assumptions and goals of the Consortium.

- disseminate information on Consortium activities and institutes in a timely manner to district staff

-provide stipends to any local district teachers selected to attend an Invitational Institute.

MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

The DOE Coordinator: The Department of Education state coordinator, located in the Office of Curriculum and Instruction, is the facilitator, the clearinghouse contact, critical to the smooth management of a large project with the philosophical and geographical scope of the ASWC. With 45 districts currently belonging to the Consortium, having management centrally housed in DOE has been an efficient and effective means of coordinating activities and programs around the state.

In Alaska, the coordinator is *not* a "director," making unilateral decisions and policies, but rather works with district representatives and the ASWC Board, University administrators, Department decision-makers and other agency representatives to promote a broad-based approach to policy and development in the Consortium. The Department contributes one-third of a curriculum specialist's over-all time and responsibilities to this management role.

District Representatives: Through correspondence and meetings, it is primarily teacher and administrative representatives chosen by their districts who drive the Consortium, initiate new efforts, preserve the quality of the programs, and determine future the growth and direction of the Consortium. District representatives meet annually.

In 1984, when the number of representatives voting on all issues became unwieldy due to the large number of member districts, the state was divided into five regions which each include from five to ten school districts. Each region elects two **ASWC Executive Board** members who act on their behalf. These regional representatives/Executive Board members, serve two-year rotating terms and are elected by all former Invitational and Basic participants in the region. All Board members must be employees of member districts, have attended an Invitational Institute, and must be approved by the local district as they carry on Board responsibilities.

Board members meet in Anchorage twice a year and hold audio conference meetings on a monthly basis. They direct the details of the Summer Institutes, serve as a communication link to local and regional efforts, establish goals and policies, and make major decisions affecting Consortium activities and programs.

Sub-committees: There are currently four sub-committees of the Consortium. Other committees can be established at the initiation of any Consortium member. While each committee must include a current or past board member, all ASWC members are invited to join.

Video and Audio Productions: The primary aim of this

committee is to provide actual in-class tapes of Alaska's exemplary teachers of writing for use during Summer Institutes and school district inservices and workshops. The interaction between teachers and students on video and in taped interviews provides concrete examples of realistic techniques and demonstrates the applicability of these methods in Alaska schools. These resources are especially useful in small, rural school sites. In 1986 a tape on reponse groups will be completed. A library of local district and commercially made tapes is maintained by the DOE coordinator and is available for loan to all member districts. Plans for future, relevant tapes are underway.

Classroom-based Research: The teacher as researcher is the focus of this committee which exists to promote and publish teacher research in Alaska. Through Board allocations three teachers received stipends toward their own classroom- based research in 1984. University faculty from the University of Alaska-Anchorage, and the University of Alaska-Fairbanks have volunteered to act as mentors for teacher- researchers, and help design specialized courses whereby teachers may receive graduate credits for their work. In 1985 the committee recommended that each year a certain ussue related to writing be selected as a focus and teacher stipends would be awarded to those who designed relevant research projects. The ASWC Board will take action on the recommendation at the 1986 annual meeting.

Administrative Connections: This ad hoc committee is comprised of all Alaskan adminstrators who have attended Summer Institutes, and can be called upon when an administrative perspective is needed to make Board decisions or assure effective implementation of training in local districts. Presentations at such conferences as the 1984 Superintendent's Summer Meeting and the 1986 Principal's Conference help administrators understand the ASWC and the impact it has had on their colleagues and neighboring districts.

Writing Assessment: In 1985 this committee was formally created to train a cadre of Alaskan teachers and administrators in the current methods of assessing student writing. Eleven districts voluntarily joined, and district- appointed representatives met at the 1985 annual meeting, audio-conferenced bi-monthly through- out the school year, and piloted various assessment methods within their districts.

In February 1986, a three-day training session was held in Juneau with sub-committee members attending. Plans have been made to continue to share information and ideas about successful assessment practices and to promote inter- district writing assessment programs. Sub- committee members are available to

other member districts to provide training, as well as to offer workshop presentations at conferences and Summer Institutes.

University Collaboration: As a member of the Consortium, the University system has selected one representative from each of the three university campuses and the community colleges. These representatives are integrated into the appropriate geographical region and participate in any regionally designed activites.

A University Instructor of Record actively participates in the Summer Intitutes by presenting sessions on current research and theory related to writing. The Instructors of Record assist in all Institute planning, management and evaluation. University representatives work with the DOE coordinator to promote ways the writing process
can be incorporated into University teacher- training programs and other inservice activities. In Anchorage and Fairbanks in the summer of 1986 site coordinators were hired to act as continuous, logistical liasons with the University, especially in the out-lying locations where Basic Institutes were being held.

A Unique System: This organizational system is unique among the 131 sites of the National Writing Project afffiliates. Most Projects are under the administrative and directional wing of a university, which is--and was-- the original organizational model for the Bay Area Writing Project. Alaska, with its rich diversity of people, cultures, and geography, has evolved a different and remarkably successful management model. The structure gives primary leadership to classroom teachers, and coordination and facilitation to the state, while retaining the sense and reality of joint ownership byschool districts, the state Department of Education, and the University system.

The strength of this model is that it preserves important "grass-roots" local control and flavor, while also reflecting and tapping into the energy, experience, and expertise of hundred of teachers--urban and rural-- throughout this huge state.

FUNDING

Funding for the Consortium comes from three main sources:

-the Alaska Department of Education, which intitiated the project in 1980 with a federal Basic Skills Grant appropriation of $70,000. In FY '87 the direct Department allocation is $10,000 and personnel services. In addition the Department provides one-third of the coordinator's time for Consortium management and clerical support.

-Member districts and the Universities, who contribute $1000.00 annually to the ASWC account which is managed by the Southeast Regional Resource Center. Authorization for use of these funds comes from the ASWC Board. In FY '86 the July carry-over funds in this account totalled $29,000, which is designated to cover ASWC expenses until the 1986-87 annual membership fees are sent in (by November 1 each year.) In addition, local districts provide funds to implement extensions of the

training within their districts. Salaries, travel, publication, and xeroxing and consultant fees were mentioned by districts in their annual progress reports in October, 1985. The expenses cited topped $309,000 across the state.

-Summer Institute participants, who paid fees of $308.00 in summer 1986 for the Basic Institute and $480.00 for the Invitational Institute, contribute slightly to the general ASWC account. The Institutes are relatively self-supporting except for the high cost of providing Alaskan teachers as presenters at each location. In addition to the regular University tuition, a fee is required of each participant to help offset the travel and honorarium fees of these Alaskan teacher-consultants.

The ASWC funds provide for Summer Institutes, one statewide annual meeting, a day of featured presentations for all former participants, classroom-based teacher research, video-tape productions, newsletter mailings, guest presenters for Summer Institutes, Advanced Retreats, and other Board-approved activities. This model of fiscal management has proved to be very cost effective.

THE TRAINING PROGRAM

The strength of the ASWC training model is that it validates teacher expertise and experience. The enduring nature of the writing process lies in the delight and joy it stimulates in mutual discovery, mutual risk-taking. It's not a set of magic or dogmatic rules. It's a celebration of common sense. The Institute provides a focal point, a networking of what goes on out there anyway, but doesn't get shared.

-from survey narratives

UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

The ASWC teacher training programs have trained 976 Alaska teachers since 1980. These programs are modeled after the highly successful Bay Area Writing Project which was created in 1974, and was further developed and refined under the auspices of the National Writing Project in over 131 Project sites worldwide. The training model is based on the following assumptions:

*Although much is known about the teaching of writing from both classroom practice and research, many teachers are unaware of that knowledge.

*The best teacher of teachers is usually a teacher who has had success in similar situations.

*Successful teachers of writing can be identifed; the best practices of successful teachers can be effectively demonstrated to others.

*Teachers of writing must write.

*Teachers have the professional responsibility to plan and implement district writing programs. Change is best accomplished by those who work in the schools, not by transient consultants, or teacher-proof materials.

*The intuitions of teachers can be a productive guide for field-based research, and practicing

*The intuitions of teachers can be a productive guide for field-based research, and practicing teachers can conduct useful studies in their classrooms.

*The responsibility for improved writing instruction is shared by both the Universities and the schools; it can best be addressed by cooperatively funded state department of education/school district/university efforts.

HOW THE WRITING CONSORTIUM TRAINING WORKS

The ASWC teacher training Summer Institutes --both Invitiational and Basic--are based on a teacher-centered, classroom-based staff development model, which takes a fresh look at the relationship between theory and practice. Participants work "up" from classroom practice to theoretical understanding, rather than "down" from theory to hypothetical understanding. Essentially, it is a process of collective inquiry in which teachers can discover their own potential--as teachers and writers--a process that is at once personally exciting and professionally empowering. Attendance at either Institute is predicated on Consortium membership.

Both Institutes are lead by ASWC-trained teacher-leaders, with Alaskan and as well as National Writing Project teacher consultants as guest presenters.

The Basic Institute: A non-selective, three-credit summer graduate course open to K-12 teachers and University staff and students. The program acquaints participants with current theories of language and learning, with special emphasis on the writing process and how writing is used as an important way of thinking, learning, and generating ideas about any subject. In a lively workshop setting participants write extensively andexplore practical classroom teaching ideas. The Basic Program can serve as a farm system for identifying promising teachers for the Inivitational Institutes. Generally, the Consortium attempts to provide as many Basic Institutes as necessary to meet teacher demand for any given summer.

The Invitiational Institutes: A selective, five-credit summer graduate seminar. This Institute is designed to develop experienced, exemplary Alaska teachers into teacher-consultants who can conduct staff development programs in writing both in their home districts and statewide. The Institute puts a premium on tapping the knowledge that comes from the experience and practice of successful teachers. Therefore, teachers must be interviewed and selected by an ASWC committee for this program. The committee is composed of former teacher-leaders, Board members and former Institute participants.

If selected, these teachers, "Institute Fellows", are paid a district-determined stipend, and must formally demonstrate teaching practices they have found effective in their own classrooms. In a seminar/ workshop setting, teachers examine rhetorical theory and research in the field of language and learning, composition, and working with adult learners. Invitational Institutes are limited to 20 teachers per session.

Advanced Institutes: Shorter versions of the Basic or Invitiational Institutes, for graduates of either Institute. These provide an advanced in-depth exploration of pertinent issues, in reponse to expressed specific interests by Consortium members. Recent Institutes have included such topics as classroom-based research, content area reading, and refinement of inservice techniques.

Retreats: Weekend workshops or seminars held on a regional basis. These shorter sessions provide teachers with a way to get together to continue to share ideas and insights on effective practices. The Dillingham School District hosted the first ASWC "Advance- Retreat" in

August of 1985 and especially invited teachers from the Western Region. In March of 1986 Yukon Flats School District held a "Weekend Advance" ("We're not retreating!") at Central Hot Springs for Interior Region members. Plans are underway in the Southeast Region for an Advanced Institute or Retreat in 1987.

BENEFITS OF THE WRITING CONSORTIUM TRAINING

The ASWC provides many benefits to participating districts, teachers, and university personnel:

-Teachers, urban and rural, validate their own best practices; existing expertise is examined in a theoretical context and reinforced. For Alaska,with its far-flung population and geographically isolated schools, this process of identifying and collecting successful teacher practices has enormous potential.

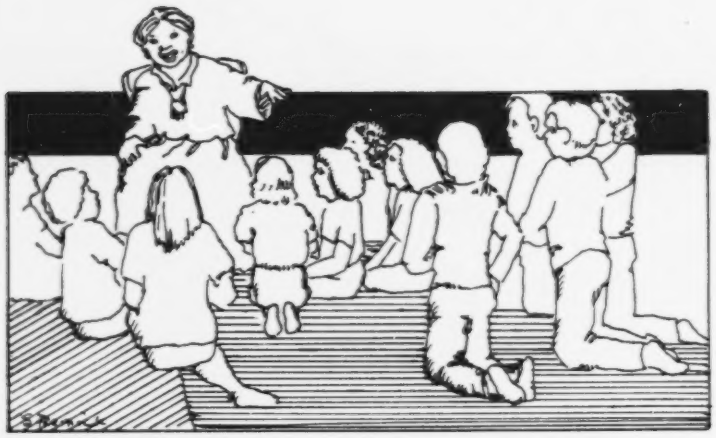
-Teachers become valuable resources to each other; there is professional collaboration across grade levels and curriculum.

-Teachers are encouraged to become researchers, to use their own classrooms, as resources for research, as well as an arena for applying the research of others.

-Teachers become leaders in their districts, able to design and implement effective writing programs, curriculums, and assessment procedures.

-Ongoing inservice coordination and access to statewide teacher consultants is made available through the Consortium.

-University faculty join the network of successful teachers and are provided with a reality base about teaching in Alaska. Pre-service prospective teachers can reap the benefits of working with experienced classroom teachers who are also consultants and leaders in the Consortium.



THE IMPACT: SURVEY RESULTS

The writing process has really changed my whole philosophy of thinking and learning...I felt very inadequate about my own writing, but through this experience I have found out why I disliked writing and now I have gained confidence which I can in turn pass on to my students...the ASWC has rejuvenated some tired teachers...it has made a clear discernable improvement in the techniques and quality of teaching of every teacher our district has sent to ASWC...I have used some aspect of the experience everyday in my classroom since attending the Institute in 1981...my kids LOVE to write!!

-from survey narratives

In May of 1986, a survey was sent out to graduates of all ASWC Invitational Institutes between 1978-1985, requesting information as to the degree of impact the training has had on both student achievement and instructional expertise in writing. The survey was made up of 61 multiple choice questions and seven open-ended questions to be answered in narrative form. Respondent narratives were often extensive and informative, and are quoted when representative of consistent trends. Probably due to the end-of-the-school-year timing of the mailing as well as the depth and amount of information requested, the return rate on the survey was 31%.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS: The respondent group appears to be representative of ASWC Invitational Institute graduates in terms of roughly equal distribution across grade levels, years and locations of Institute attendance, and in terms of current jobs: 83% teach for at least a portion of the day. They are experienced teachers: 91% have taught for over six years, 32% for over sixteen years. About half the group (52%) was from Anchorage or Fairbanks; the remainder were from all across the state.

Current or last teaching assignments were described as:

47%: English/Language Arts
43%: Elementary

2%: Social Studies
2%: Science
2%: Music or Art
1%: Physical Education
1%: Math

They described their most important reasons for participating in the Writing Consortium as wanting professional and personal growth (82%) and to learn about specific writing problems(55%)--rather than colleague recommendation (30%), earning college credits (21%), or certificate renewal (10%).

Their major involvement with ASWC activities following Summer Institutes was in attending meetings and workshops at district or state level(38%), and presenting at such meetings(34%.) Their involvement as project coordinators of courses, workshops, or programs (10%) or writing for district publications (1%) was much less. However, a significant majority of the group felt that, due to their participation in the Consortium, there was an increase or great increase in the frequency of: their discussions with fellow teachers about writing(85%); collaborative activities with other teachers(68%); and taking a leadership role in the planning of school site or district writing programs(59%).

The Writing Consortium experience was described as having some or a great degree of impact on their confidence (98%), enjoyment(95%), and skill(90%) in teaching writing, and on their ability to use current knowledge about teaching to explain their practices(86%).

In terms of viewing themselves as writers, 78% of the group said the experience had some or a great degree of impact on their enjoyment of writing, while 77% said it similarly impacted their proficiency as writers.

SUMMARY/COMMENTARY

The great majority of survey respondents appear to be experienced teachers from all over the state who attended ASWC Institutes for their own personal and professional growth. While some of them actively participated in ASWC presentations and meetings subsequent to their Institute experience, most of these teachers described their primary follow-up activities as supportive networking, sharing, and "teaming" with colleagues. More than anything else, this enactment of commitment at the personal level appears to have caused the "ripple effect" of growing enthusiasm about the Consoritum and the writing process that has moved through Alaska schools. This reinforces recent research about school-based change, namely that long-range shifts in attitude require "grass-roots" support over approximately a five-year period.

IMPACT ON TEACHING SKILLS

TEACHING EXPERTISE:

AREA OF TEACHING EXPERTISE	% RATING SELF AS SKILLED OR VERY SKILLED	% RATING ASWC AS HELPFUL OR VERY HELPFUL IN GAINING SKILL
Motivating student writing	81%	85%
Giving constructive feedback to students	77%	75%
Designing student writing assignments	76%	81%
Using writing tasks to enhance learning in all areas	75%	82%
Evaluating student writing	75%	72%
Helping students organize their writing	74%	75%
Diagnosing student writing problems	65%	61%
Convincing students to revise and edit	63%	69%

TEACHING STRATEGIES:

SPECIFIC TEACHING TECHNIQUE/STRATEGY	% USING FREQUENTLY	%RATING ASWC AS HIGHLY RELATED TO FREQUENT USE
Pre-writing activities	87%	86%
Students "publishing" their writing	79%	74%
Writing along with students	62%	67%
Relating grammar to writing	60%	44%
Students writing for various audiences	56%	70%
Peer response groups	55%	75%
Students writing in various classes	49%	60%
teacher-student writing conferences	47%	49%

SUMMARY/COMMENTARY:

The largest percentage of Summer Institute graduates (81%) rated themselves as skilled or very skilled in motivating students to write . The ASWC training stresses that pre-writing activities are designed for exactly that purpose, so it follows that such activities are also cited as being those frequently used by the greatest percentage (87%). The tendency is naturally to use often the strategies and techniques with which one feels the most skilled and which result in the most student success.

This strong group sense of being skilled in motivating writing and using pre-writing activities effectively is reflected throughout the narrative section of the surveys as well. Respondents

repeatedly and consistently mention significantly increasing fluency in student writing, the ultimate goal of motivational/pre-writing strategies. Respondents apparently feel skilled in this area, and a large percentage (85%) feel that the ASWC training was helpful or very helpful in gaining that skill.

> *Student learning logs indicated a greater feeling of confidence and ease with writing assignments....students are writing so much more, so much more easily.*
>
> *There is not only an improved writing ability, but a willingness to express themselves in writing more freely.*
>
> *Students have learned not to dread writing, and to feel comfortable with it.*
>
> *There is terrific growth in ..fluency. Student interest and motivation was high. Students think of themselves as authors.*
>
> *There is greater involvememt in writing tasks, longer time involved in writing, less resistance to writing activities...*
>
> *The average length of a returned assignment increased from less than a page to three full pages.*
>
> *Students write more, with less stress. They often write on their own, as well as for assignments.*

Between 74 and 77% of the group rated themselves as skilled or very skilled in using writing to enhance learning in all areas, evaluating student writing, giving constructive feedback to students, designing student writing assignments,and in helping students organize their writing. Approximately the same percentage(79%) use student publishing frequently as a teaching strategy to encourage and support student writing efforts.

Responses throughout the narratives reinforce some of these figures. Social studies, math, bilingual, and science teachers, as well as a counselor, attested to the value of using writing as a thinking and learning tool in subjects other than language arts.

> *As a counselor I don't teach writing, but I do use writing activities in counseling groups much more than I used to, because I have found that the statement "writing generates ideas" to be true.*
>
> *The Writing Project has been an important part of my teaching of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. I would encourage any Social Studies Teacher to participate (in the Consortium) if the opportunity affords itself.*

Additionally, respondents cited a variety of ways in which they are assessing student writing: district/school/class holistic and analytic scoring of periodic writing samples; student writing folders/portfolios kept over time; standardized test scores; monitoring length and quantity of student writing, types and numbers of publications.

> *Looking through writing folders, evidence of the following appears: increase in length of writing, increased detail, inproved vocabulary, grammar, syntax,*

improved editing dkills, increase in number of drafts for polished work, improved introductions and conclusions, a definite style or voice.

Holistic writing assessment scores are going up district -wide.

This year my classes produced seven newpapers, (49,000 words!) of student written, student edited work. Two students were nominated for NCTE competition, 11 for ACTE competition; three wrote for magazines, three wrote for local newspapers.

Nothing in the narratives referred specifically to the skill of designing writing assignments (although the oft-mentioned, significant increase in student writing fluency might imply an improved ability to do this). Neither was specific reference made to the skill of giving constructive feedback to students or helping students organize their writing. These skills, however, are implict in conducting writing conferences and response groups, which were often referred to, although usually in the context of a desire for more training.

A lesser percentage of the group (65%) felt skilled or very skilled at diagnosing student writing problems and at convincing students to revise and edit their writing. From the narratives, it would appear that Consortium teachers are emphasizing revision and editing as part of the flow of the process, finding ways to reinforce the idea of drafting and "re-seeing" writing, and having some success in doing so. A few references were made to the use of writing response groups in this regard.

By doing a great deal of group response and teacher/student conferences, I now see a great deal of content, additions, deletions, and changes--more than just spelling and punctuations corrections.

Many students now accept that a fast write is only the beginning. They revise and rewrite without groaning. Many know and understand that the process is sometimes more important than the product...

Students have certainly learned to be receptive to revision; I have also required students to write more often even if it doesn't require a final finished draft.

However, although 75% of the group felt that the ASWC training was highly related to their use of peer response groups, the percentages of ASWC graduates frequently using peer writing groups (55%) and teacher-student writing conferences(49%) are significantly less than those frequently using other cited activities. Throughout the narrative sections of the survey there are frequent comments regarding the need for more training in these areas of structured response to writing.

I'd like some help in response groups at the high school level. My junior high kids are terrific but as they reach high school they become very self-conscious and reluctant responders.

I feel particularly at a loss at jr. high level, average groups 35-40 in a class. I gave up peer response. I would take a demonstration or preferably a workshop with kids present to convince me it is a sane idea.

I need more hints on how to make response groups work in upper elementary; more on how to better teach grammar and spelling within writing.

I'd like to see more emphasis placed on managing response groups. I find that the most difficult part of the process.

I would like to see more 1 unit courses offered during the school year--a course on grammar and correctness, and response groups.

Another general area that respondents requested more training in throughout the narratives was correctness, especially the relating of grammar to writing. This reflects the lower percentages of those with self-perceived skill in convincing students to revise and edit (63%) as well as of those frequently relating grammar to writing (60%.)

Example: The kid who will write a great I-Search paper--lots of research, enthusiasm, accuracy--but almost technically a complete disaster to the point that only the student and I rejoice. How can I squeeze more energy out of this writer and give him the skills he needs to communicate effectively wih someone besides me? I"m still wondering how grammar fits into the picture; I'm confused about how to teach the mechanics of writing within the writing project framework.

I need help diagnosing student writing problems or perhaps more exactly what to do once we've discerned the problem. Kids are really writing. Now, what do we do to improve it? When I attended the institute a lot of emphasis was on fluency--getting kids to write anything. This was great! Now I need help with the kid who isn't so motivated but does write...and is trying. We don't want to discourage these kids, so how do we take the next step --without reverting to red pencil demons of yesteryear?

Percentages were also lower in regards to those frequently using writing for various audiences,(49%) and writing along with students(62%); these strategies were not mentioned in the narratives.

IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND SKILLS:

Student Attitude or Skill	% rating ASWC as having some or great degree of impact on attitude/skill
confidence in writing	91%
overall fluency/productivity	88%
valuing of writing	87%
enjoyment of writing	87%
use of language to learn	77%

One of the open-ended questions in the survey asked: "What empirical evidence can you cite as indications of growth in student writing proficiency?" Some of the respondents (18%) mentioned specific assessment instruments used over time (yearly writing folders, holistic assessments, pre/post writing samples) which had indicated to them that there was generally "much" or "great" or "some" improvement in writing or the "quality of writing" in their students. A greater degree of publishing student writing was cited by 19% of group as a means of assessing increased student involvement and enthusiasm.

On the other hand, without necessarily describing their methods of assessment, some respondents also emphasized specific areas in which they had noticed significant overall growth or achievement. These areas fell into five categories.

ASWC GRADUATES' PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT:

Area of student growth or achievement in writing	% of respondents making specific reference to student growth in that area in their narratives
Positive attitude/fluency	56%
Use of revision/editing	14%
Correctness	6%
Writing across the curriculum	3%
Writing response groups	3%

SUMMARY/COMMENTARY:

The greatest degree of student growth and achievement appears to fall in the categories of motivation/fluency (confidence, enjoyment, valuing, positive attitude) and student publishing. This is consistent with ASWC graduates' self-identified areas of greatest teaching expertise and most frequently used teaching strategies: motivating student writing/prewriting activities, and student publishing. Opened-ended narratives about student achievement provoked a greater number of comments about increased fluency/improved attitudes toward writing, and increased student publishing than the total number of comments about all other areas of growth combined.

This apparent dramatic change in student's attitudes toward writing--evidenced by increased enthusiasm, sense of authorship, involvement, interest, and publication-- --seems to have made a great impact on ASWC graduates responding to the survey. A great majority of them (between 74 and 86%) attribute their skill in effecting that change directly to their ASWC Institute training.

Effectively motivating writing increases fluency and creates a classroom climate where writing is warmly invited, where young authors are supported in their efforts and rewarded with real audiences and publication. This climate is critical to the successful subsequent introduction of the skills involved in responding to, revising, and editing writing.

Fewer respondents felt that students had achieved the kind of growth in these areas that they had in the areas of motivation and fluency. This is consistent with the fact that a lesser percentage of the respondents feel skilled or highly skilled in teaching in these skills of the "middle" stages of the writing process, while a high percentage feel skilled or highly skilled at motiviating writing with pre-writing activities and publishing.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE
Stage Two: "Bridging the Gap

I see fluency and joy when I watch my children write!

My students' SRA scores have risen but I consider that a small gain compared to the excitement the kids have for writing!

While not in a one-to-one correlation, I think my students' increased writing in the classroom leads to increases on various district standardized tests. But when my students say they now enjoy writing more than ever, that's enough for me!

STAGE ONE

The first five years of the Consortium has necessarily included an all-important focus on fostering fluency and enjoyment of writing: breaking down years of resistance to, discomfort with, even fear of, writing, on the part of both students and teachers. Teachers needed basic information and the most current research about writing as a process, and they needed to re-acquaint themselves with their own writing processes, so that they could teach from within that kmowledge as writers themselves.

Through the Consortium they were provided with this knowledge and experience. In applying what they had learned, they discovered that writing "rekindles human connections in the classroom" as writing researcher Lucy Calkins puts it, and can profoundly change the whole social dynamics of a classroom, as well as the way teachers feel about themselves and theirprofession.

As the respondents to the ASWC survey have indicated, the tremendous growth in writing fluency and in the amount of student publication-- as well as the increase in writing quality that seems to accompany it--have become exciting trends in Consortium classrooms from Barrow to Ketchikan. The state-wide bond and networking the Consortium fosters has enabled a sharing of achievements with students and colleagues alike, and a degree of on-going learning and support that is unique among educational programs in this state.

Many survey respondents requested additional courses and training to support their own

writing!! This exciting new sense of the enjoyment of writing has almost been--all by itself--"enough!"

STAGE TWO

Consortium participants are now ready for "Stage Two": channeling more of the energy generated by the Summer Institutes into a focus on writing stages beyond fluency, while still maintaining basic programs. As one respondent put it, it's time for the Consortium to support teachers in "bridging the gap between helping students become more fluent writers and helping students become excellent writers. The problems after we get kids writing .... need to be addressed and emphasized."

This echoes frequent comments in the survey narratives regarding the desire, interest, and/or need for more knowledge in three areas: student writing response groups (and the classroom management skills inherent to using them), issues of style/correctness/editing, and evaluation and grading.

It is not clear whether the majority recommendation is for strengthening the Institute training in these areas, or for providing more follow-up training, or both, but there are a variety of ways to respond to this interest, many suggested by survey respondents: more credit courses, weekend retreats, Advanced Institutes, writing camps with students, clssroom-based research, and one of the most popular suggestions: team teaching--observing other teachers teach.

"Stage Two" requires a different focus, but no less the "re-kindling of human connections and the emphasis on student achievement and teacher learning and expertise. Teachers around Alaska can and should certainly still benefit from the Basic and Invitational training programs. However, there is now a trained cadre of nearly a thousand teachers around the state, some of whom have been using process approaches to writing instruction in their classrooms for several years, and their needs are different.

These teachers are ready for more in-depth training and idea sharing within the theoretical context they were given in their early training and the experience base they now have in implementing it. They are ready to be supported in their explorations of the middle stages of the writing process, and to do more writing themselves.

Alaska teachers are also ready to do their own research in these areas--to formulate questions, conduct qualitative/ethnographic inquiries, and publish their findings in Consortium-sponsored publications. They want to continue contributing actively and centrally to the betterment of their profession.

The Consortium must --and will-- create the next five years with the spirit and enthusiasm that it has the last five, maintaining its belief in and support for the expertise, resourcefulness, dedication, and spirit of the Alaska teacher.

APPENDIX

I. COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Can content reading and writing processes be tied together in an inservice in a small rural high school?

A. Recognizing the need for improving our students' reading skills, the faculty of Nelson Island High School in Toksook Bay decided to hold a content area reading inservice. The philosophy, methods, and materials, of the Alaska Writing Consortium blended perfectly with those of the Alaska Content Reading Cadre for a joint effort.

Over a one year period, three two-day workshops were held at Toksook Bay, conducted by pairs of consultants from the Writing Consortium and the Content Reading Cadre.

The concept of bringing well qualified presenters to a "bush" school and scheduling a full year for one topic is one of the most viable options for staff development. The high quality of presentations was evidenced by the direct effect had on classroom instruction. The goal of the project was met in that our faculty began to consistently provide reading and writing skill development in content area classes. In almost 30 years of experience in education, this workshop stands out as one of the most significant ones I've organized or in which I've participated.

Jack Giedd-Clark, Principal
Nelson Island High School

Q. Can the ASWC help bilingual teachers?

A. I am a teacher trainer for Inupiaq teachers and aides in North Slope Borough School District. I was born and raised in Barrow. My first language is Inupiaq, and English is my second.

From a cross cultural standpoint, I fully support the ASWC. The program has given me competence in writing, and I have applied the theory to Inupiaq language.

Emily Ipalook Wilson
Bilingual Specialist
North Slope Borough S.D.

Q. What do teachers from small rural schools say about their involvement in the ASWC?

A. I have taught in multigraded classrooms in rural Alaska for five years. Currently I teach third and fourth grades in a logging camp of 120 people in Southeast Alaska.

The Writing Consortium has given me the means to help students at many skill levels learn research skills, grammar, group interaction, artistic expression, and much more in a non-threatening individualized environment.

The techniques and principals of the ASWC have given my class a sense of purpose and cohesiveness, in which students are successful at their own levels.

Paul Mercer
La Bouchere Bay

A. What I really liked was the intense sharing with quality teachers. There was a balance between information dissemination and hands-on experience which created the ideal blend for learning and growing. Also, we developed a whole teacher network across Alaska, including the bush.

Arlie Swett
Dillingham

Q. What do administrators say about the Writing Consortium?

A. The Writing Consortium has led to holistic writing assessment of each of our students within the district, has provided the district with a specific model to utilize and has fostered a writing-across-the curriculum effort.

Dr. Fred Pomeroy
Superintendent
Kenai Peninsula S. D.

A. This project is an exciting grass-roots program that stimulates the creativity, interest and desire of students to express themselves in writing; it transcends and crosses all curricula areas from physical education to language arts.

Dr. Kenneth S. Burnley
Superintendent
Fairbanks S. D.

A. Strengths of the ASWC include the high enthusiasm it creates among teachers, classroom usefulness, students seeing positive results, mesurable results, and good common sense teaching.

Spike Jorgenson
Superintendent
Alaska Gateway S. D.

II. INFORMATION CONTACT FOR THE ASWC

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Juneau, Alaska 99811

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IV. 1985-86 CONSORTIUM MEMBERS

ARCTIC REGION

School Districts:
- North Slope
- Nome City
- Lower Kuskokwim
- Kashunamiut
- Lower Yukon

Northwest Community College
Chukchi Community College
Kuskokwim Community College

WESTERN REGION

School Districts:
- Dillingham
- Kenai
- Kodiak
- Lake and Peninsula
- Southwest Region
- Aleutian Region

Kodiak Community College

INTERIOR REGION

School Districts:
- Fairbanks
- Galena
- Iditarod
- Yukon Koyukuk
- Yukon Flats
- Alaska Gateway
- Delta/Greely
- Nenana
- Kuspuk

University of Alaska-Fairbanks
Tanana Valley Community College

SOUTHEAST REGION

School Districts:
- Juneau
- Sitka
- Southeast Island
- Cordova
- Pelican
- Ketchikan
- Yakutat
- Wrangell
- Haines
- Mt. Edgecumbe
- Kake

University of Alaska-Juneau
Islands Community College
Ketchikan Community College

SOUTHCENTRAL REGION

School Districts:
- Anchorage
- Valdez
- Railbelt
- Mat-Su
- Copper River
- Chugach

University of Alaska-Anchorage
Anchorage Community College
Kenai Community College
Mat-Su Community College
Prince William Sound Community College

IV. FLUENCY VS. CORRECTNESS: A LETTER EXCHANGE FROM THE ASWC NETWORK NEWSLETTER (March, April/May issues, 1986)

Dear Editor,

WHAT PRICE FLUENCY?
A Modest Objection

Since I suffer from those twin maladies of being both a non-ASWC trainee and a teacher schooled in rather traditional methods of writing, perhaps I may be excused for harboring some concerns about the fluency vs. correctness matter raised by Mike Walker in your last issue. (January, 1986)

I will first admit that I am delighted with the recent fervor (fever?) with which the teaching of writing skills is being approached in Alaska. However, I find that I am experiencing a new and growing sense of guilt following each discussion with a fresh ASWP trainee...I have taken lately to locking my classroom door...and speaking in hushed tones to some of my classes about--shhhh, grammar!!

...It seems that some who are schooled in the new(?) writing, are now espousing the theory that FLUENCY must precede FORM, or if they are not prioritized in this chronological fashion, at the least, they must be given equal attention on an "...ascending spiral of fluency and correctness."

...Now I realize that some years ago teachers of writing recognized very little correlation between the amount of time spent in the study of "raw" grammar and success in composition. In fact, one report showed that the study of grammar was actually detrimental to the learning of composition skills because teachers so steeped in teaching tradtional grammar never seem to get around to applying it in composition exercises. There are apparently different forces at work here. However, nowhere did any research suggest that the study of grammar be eliminated. I can only wonder at how students acquire this propensity for correctness... (that) Mr. Walker speaks of in his discussion as "...correctness coming naturally to the writer." ...My students will either (a) catch and correct their own errors or (b) a response partner (another student?) will do this for them and bingo-- correctness blooms!! Well, pardon me if I am skeptical.

At this point in my discussions with some ASWP trainees, the conversation deteriorates into vagaries; it seems that the "worthwhile ideas generated in a surge of fluency..." just may serve an end in themselves. Fine. But is the need for correctness being ignored under the guise that it will come "naturally" or on some magically ascending spiral? Are we teachers of writing becoming satisfied with seeing smiles of delight on our students' faces when they experience the joys of fluency, at the expense of saying to them that the form, the "correctness" if you will, the sweat and pain of revision, are necessary to the original purpose ---that of communicating our thoughts in writing as opposed to speaking?? I hope not.

I fail to see how one can really isolate form and advocate fluency to the

degree that allows only the free flowing of ideas to the page and not inadvertently be saying to a blossoming writer that this fluency is paramount in the process. When I place the task of editing for correctness solely in the hands of the students in a response group situation, I find much concern on the part of the respondees for what was said, but I do not find a great deal of concern for correctness. Most students cannot or do not wish to deal with this.

So, instead of a wonderfully ascending spiral of fluency and correctness, I have yet to escape the first ring; I have yet to find my way out of the necessity for going back to my classes with the traditional grammar methods for answers to correctness. Perhaps it is a circle instead of a spiral, or perhaps it is the old "chicken -or-egg" syndrome; or perhaps I need to attend one of the training sessions and steal away with the secret of fire.

Sincerely,

Bob Cherry
Dillingham School District

Dear Editor,

What Price Fluency:
A Middle Ground

Bob Cherry's right, you know. If you espouse fluency at the expense of correctness, you get some really creative writing that no one else has the stomach to read. Bob and I went to different school together, so I know wherefrom he comes. I watch my students responding to the writing of their peers and grit and grimace as they edit less than perfectly EVERY TIME!

And then I either have to point out additional corrections to them in my final pre-evaluation conference, or sometimes I even have to spend valuable time teaching the entire class some long-forgotten or never-learned rule of standard usage. Granted, the teaching has become more relevant because it applies directly to a student paper lying right there on my desk, but aren't there better ways for an English teacher to spend his time than in teaching English? Isn't the writing process supposed to eliminate the need for this?

Of course not. Those of us who spend all our time immersed in the writing process have learned that in the fluency-form -correctness continuum, equal emphasis must be placed on all stages. If not, all that we have accomplished is the production of a different kind of bad writing. Instead of the perfectly correct inanimate pap that we wrote when we were in school, our students would be cranking out scatter-gun pieces of pure soul, unreadable in form, unpublishable in their absence of convention. That's why I like the writing process and its recursive nature. Revision can--and should--occur at any and every stage of the process. I've handed a paper back to a student after the paper has been evaluated and the grade has

been entered in to "the book" and said, "There's still a work misspelled (or a comma splice or a weak verb or an agreement problem) in there; find it and bring it back to me some day." And they always do!

Don't throw away the usage handbooks. They are after all the repositories of the conventions of our language. Keep one on your desk and refer to it in broad daylight if you choose. But don't tear out a valuable chunk of writing time to close the classroom doors and teach "grammar." That's studying recipe books without a kitchen, teaching carpentry without access to lumber, practicing jump-shots without a basketball. That's a waste of time.

Send the students back into the process as often as is necessary to satisfy your need for correctness, and allow them to fast-write as often as is necessary to satisfy their needs for free expression. And take an ASWC Institute one of these summers; ASWC needs teachers like Bob Cherry to keep us growing.

Sincerely,

Bill Chalmers
Skagway School District